

Plant City, FL (March 7, 2011) – Rep. Gus Bilirakis (FL-09) paid tribute to the strawberry industry today by participating in the annual Florida Strawberry Festival in Plant City.

"Not only is this event an important way of recognizing the local strawberry industry, but it highlights the larger role that agriculture plays in the state of Florida," Bilirakis said. "It's always an honor and pleasure to participate in the annual festivities."

The 11-day festival first began in 1930, and attracts visitors from throughout the state, country and world. Today, it's a showcase not only of the strawberry, but the agriculture, commerce, livestock, fine arts and horticulture industries of Florida.

In Hillsborough County alone, there are around 2,800 farms that produce fruit and vegetable crops with an annual value of more than \$400 million. More than 8,000 acres of strawberries are planted annually in the local area.

Monday's Strawberry parade begins at 1 p.m. in downtown Plant City. The festival runs through March 13. For more information, visit the festival website at www.flstrawberryfestival.com.